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IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE

Applicants : Hiroshi NOMURA et al.

Group Art Unit: 2873

Appln. No. : 09/960,382

Filed : September 24, 2001

For  OPEN DRIVE MECHANISM

INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

Assistant Commissioner of Patents
Washington, DC 20231

Sir:

In accordance with the duty of disclosure under 37 C.F.R. § 1.56, § 1.97-1.98, Applicants hereby call the following documents to the Examiner's attention:

Applicants note that the above-mentioned application is one of twelve related co-pending, commonly assigned U.S. Patent Applications filed on the same day (September 24, 2001), which are listed below at the end of this Information Disclosure Statement.

The following documents, which relate to electrical and mechanical technologies, are brought to the Examiner's attention:

U.S. Patent No. 4,918,480 to HORI, entitled "Electromagnetic Shutter for Camera", which issued on April 17, 1990;

U.S. Patent No. 4,975,725 to MORISAWA, entitled "Aperture and Focus Adjusting Device for a Camera", which issued on December 4, 1990;

U.S. Patent No. 5,144,352 to SHONO, entitled "Control Apparatus of Focus and Shutter of

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U.S. Patent No. 5,222,407 to SEKIGUCHI, entitled "Slip Clutch Mechanism", which issued on June 29, 1993;

U.S. Patent No. 5,237,357 to MORISAWA, entitled "Aperture and Focus Adjusting Device for a Camera", which issued on August 17, 1993;

U.S. Patent No. 5,313,244 to ARAI, entitled "Camera", which issued on May 17, 1994;

U.S. Patent No. 5,646,790 to KOHMOTO et al., entitled "Zoom Lens Barrel", which issued on July 8, 1997;

U.S. Patent No. 5,671,449 to SHIMIZU, entitled "Switching System for Camera", which issued on September 23, 1997;

U.S. Patent No. 5,701,208 to SATO et al., entitled "Clutch Apparatus for Zoom Lens Barrel", which issued on December 23, 1997;

U.S. Patent No. 5,708,533 to HAMASAKI, entitled "Zoom Lens Barrel", which issued on January 13, 1998;

U.S. Patent No. 5,774,748 to ITO et al., entitled "Zoom Lens Barrel and Camera Having Such a Barrel", which issued on June 30, 1998;

U.S. Patent No. 5,842,057 to NOMURA et al., entitled "Camera with Lens Barrier Apparatus", which issued on November 24, 1998; and

Japanese Laid Open Patent Publication No. 2000-275518 (Japanese Application No. 11-79572) to ENOMOTO et al., which was published on October 6, 2000, along with an English language Abstract of the same. Applicants note that this document is discussed on page 3 of the specification of the instant application and is a counterpart of U.S. Patent Application No.

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09 534,307.

In addition, the following documents are also brought to the Examiner's attention, which generally relate to optical technologies:

U.S. Patent No. 4,917,482 to ITO, entitled "Compact Zoom Lens System Capable of High Zoom Ratio and Having Coverage of a Wide Visual Field", which issued on April 17, 1990;

U.S. Patent No. 4,978,204 to ITO, entitled "High Zoom Ratio Zoom Lens System for Use in a Compact Camera", which issued on December 18, 1990;

U.S. Patent No. 4,984,877 to ITO, entitled "High Zoom-Ratio/Zoom Lens System for Use in a Compact Camera", which issued on January 15, 1991;

U.S. Patent No. 5,572,276 to HIRAKAWA, entitled "Inner Focus Type Telephoto Zoom Lens", which issued on November 5, 1996;

U.S. Patent No. 6,028,714 to KOYAMA, entitled "Zoom Lens", which issued on February 22, 2000; and

Japanese Laid Open Patent Publication No. 8-146296 to HONDA et al., which was published on June 7, 1996, along with an English language Abstract of the same.

Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner consider the above materials and cite the patent documents. Copies of the above-noted documents are attached and have been listed on a PTO-1449 Form which is also attached hereto. Accordingly, the Examiner is requested to initial the appropriate spaces on the attached PTO-1449 Form and to return a copy of the Form to the Applicants with the next official communication in the present application to confirm consideration of these documents.

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Applicants also bring to the Examiner's attention the above-mentioned eleven related, co-pending and commonly assigned patent applications, which are discussed on page 1 of the specification of the instant application:

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/960,309 to NOMURA et al., entitled "Zoom Lens Mechanism", which was filed on September 24, 2001. Applicants note that this document is discussed on page 1 of the specification of the instant application;

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/960,515 to NOMURA et al., entitled "Eccentricity-Prevention Mechanism for a Pair of Lens-Supporting Rings", which was filed on September 24, 2001;

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/960,516 to NOMURA et al., entitled "Lens Barrel", which was filed on September 24, 2001;

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/960,518 to NOMURA et al., entitled "Ring Member Shift Mechanism and Lens Group Shift", which was filed on September 24, 2001;

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/960,520 to NOMURA et al., entitled "Lens Barrel", which was filed on September 24, 2001;

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/960,521 to NOMURA et al., entitled "Reduction Gear Mechanism", which was filed on September 24, 2001;

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/961,185 to NOMURA et al., entitled "Zoom Lens Barrel", which was filed on September 24, 2001;

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U.S. Patent Application No. 09 961,186 to NOMURA, entitled "Lens Drive Control Apparatus for Zoom Lens System Having a Switching Lens Group", which was filed on September 24, 2001;

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/961,231 to NOMURA et al., entitled "Zoom Lens Mechanism", which was filed on September 24, 2001;

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/961,232 to NOMURA et al., entitled "Lens Barrel", which was filed on September 24, 2001; and

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/961,233 to NOMURA et al., entitled "Lens Barrel", which was filed on September 24, 2001.

Further, Applicants call the following co-pending and commonly assigned patent applications to the Examiner's attention:

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/534,307 to ENOMOTO et al., entitled "Zoom Lens System", which was filed on March 23, 2000. Applicants note that this document is discussed on page 3 of the specification of the instant application;

U.S. Patent Application No. 09/769,458 to ENOMOTO et al., entitled "Zoom Lens System", which was filed on January 26, 2001;

U.S. Patent Application No. 09 791,771 to ENOMOTO, entitled "Zoom Lens System", which was filed on February 26, 2001; and

U.S. Patent Application No. 09 791,890 to ENOMOTO et al., entitled "Zoom Lens System", which was filed on February 26, 2001.

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In accordance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.98(a)(2)(iii), copies of the above-mentioned applications are attached hereto. However, the Examiner is also requested to review the file wrapper of these U.S. patent applications at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office and the references of record, if any, cited therein.

Applicants note that any comments herein with respect to the contents of the cited references are provided only for the Examiner's convenience. The presence or absence of detailed comments herein is not intended to, and does not, reflect Applicants' opinion as to the degree of materiality of any specific reference. The included comments are not intended to, and do not, set forth Applicants' interpretation of the teachings of the prior art. Applicants intend that the Examiner refer directly to each provided reference and co-pending application to determine the extent and nature of the teachings therein. Accordingly, no estoppel should be deemed to attach to Applicants' comments herein.

Further, Applicants note that an Office Action on the merits has not yet issued in the instant application, and thus, no fee is required to ensure consideration of this statement. However, if an Office Action on the merits has issued and is crossing in the mail with this statement, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge Deposit Account No. 19-0089 any fee necessary to ensure consideration of the submitted materials.

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Should the Examiner have any questions, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned
at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
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March 7, 2002
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